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ABSTRACT

Present literature of adult education appears to be negating learners' responsibility in making decisions in the curriculum development process and gives little attention to procedures for securing active involvement. There seems to be a need for bringing "guided learning" to the attention of those working in the field of adult education. The framework for identifying when an adult educator is guiding learning was developed, based on "philosophical patterns" which identify the basis for operationalizing the education process and on the "operational pattern" which identifies actual acts and moves on the part of the adult educator that indicate commitment to the construct of guided learning. It was developed in terms of a limited set of crucial criteria. Each criterion was then defined in terms of conditions which must be met if it is present. It was apparent that commitment to guided learning was a matter of degree; therefore, most of the means of measurement have been developed in the form of a continuum. [Not available in hardcopy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (author/eb)

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A FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORING THE ADULT EDUCATOR'S COMMITMENT TOWARD THE CONSTRUCT OF "GUIDED LEARNING"

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A FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORING THE ADULT EDUCATOR'S COMMITMENT TOWARD THE CONSTRUCT OF "GUIDED LEARNING"

Need for a Functional Theory.

The ability to successfully plan and implement the methods, techniques, and strategies in the education process depends upon the educator's cognizance of a basis for his actions. Decision based on expediency rather than cognizance of a functional theory carries the burden of potential failure. Each adult educator must build a functional theory of adult learning. With this, the adult educator then has a conceptual basis with which he can plan, implement, and evaluate the learning situations which are grounded in the personally sensitive realities of the adult teaching-learning situation.

In reviewing the literature, there are two seemingly divergent philosophies that can be identified on the basis of true disagreement unrelated to sematic discrepancies. Although underlying assumptions regarding the nature of the learning process and the role of adult education are issues of the two divergent philosophies, their true polarity lies in disagreement over the functional role of the adult educator as an agent of the education process.

Implicit in early interpretations of adult education and the functional role of the adult educator there lies a philosophy based on the beliefs that the functional role of the adult educator is not that of an instructional nature, but rather, one in which the adult educator's role is that of a guidance function. On the other hand, much of the literature of adult education which discusses the teacher role in education of adults tends to ignore or negate the ideal of learner responsibility for decisions. Adult education is defined in the 1964 book of the Commission of Professors of Adult Education as:

> "a relationship of between an educational agent and a learner in which the agent selects, arranges, and continuously directs a sequence of progressive tasks that provide systematic experiences to achieve learning for those whose participation in such activities is subsidiary and supplemental to a primary productive role in society."[1]

Granted that this statement probably is more concerned with independent study rather than what occurs when adults work with adult educators, still, it seems consistent with the other recent writings which tend to focus on the adult educator's complete responsibility for decisions in the adult education curriculum and daily operators and to be preoccupied with methods and techniques rather than with the idea of how the teacher's strategy helps the learner learn.

That there is divergence of thought in adult education reflects also divergence of thought in other phases of education. One way of explaining this may be due to the fact that the construct of guided learning is a construct yet not fully developed and defined in the total field of education.

The Study in Brief

The concept of "guided learning" was selected to examine. Although early literature of adult education emphasized and seemed committed to guided learning present literature appears to be negating learners' responsibility in making decisions in the curriculum development process and gives little attention to procedures for securing active involvement. Because of this trend which seems to be dissonant with some of the philosophies of adult education, there seems to be a need for bringing "guided learning" to the attention of those working

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1 Coolie Verner, "Definition of Terms", Gale Jensen, A.A.Liverright, and Wilbur Hallenbeck, ed., Adult Education. Adult Education Association, 1964, p. 32

in the field of adult education and researching the extent to which it is a valuable concept.

Search of the literature indicated that it was not possible simply to develop a framework for examining commitment to guided learning. The literature did not provide a sharply defined concept. It is made up of a bundle of related ideas which have not been drawn together into a precise description or framework. Therefore, the problem first was one of presenting a concept of guided learning as it applies in adult education and then one of identifying how the adult educator's commitment to it can be determined.

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to develop a theoretical framework and means of measuring: "When adult educators are committed to the construct of "guided learning".

Methodology: The research design for this study utilized the collection of data from both primary and secondary sources in the literature and as such would be classified as a library study. The thesis involved the analysis and evaluation of constructs from various sources and finally a synthesis form them of a more precise description of guided learning as it would apply in adult education.

Limitations: The study was limited to some extent by the fact it was based on one individual's approach to the development of the framework and criteria presented. It is not the result of a representative number of researchers "commissioned" to the development; nor has it yet been shared with relevant others for review.

Summary and Implications: The framework for identifying when an adult educator is guiding learning was developed based on "philosophical patterns" which itentify the basis for operationalizing the education process, and the "operational pattern" which identifies actual acts and moves on the part of

the adult educator that indicate commitment to the construct of guided learning. It was developed in terms of a limited set of crucial criteria. Each criterion was then defined in terms of the conditions which must be met if it is present. It was apparent that commitment to various ideas which are part of guided learning probably were not an "either, or" proposition but a matter of degree. An adult educator may be more or less committed to guided learning than he is to other teaching styles. Therefore, most of the means of measurement have been developed in the form of a continuum.

The Philosophical Pattern: The Macro Approach is concerned with the broad action structure of the adult educator and how he generally operates in the total educational process. The following criteria and conditions for meeting of the criteria were identified:

CRITERION NO. 1... The adult educator demonstrates respect for the ability and autonomy of the learner.

Conditions:

(A) The educator credits adult learners with the ability to both create ideas and judge between them.

(B) The adult educator credits adult learners with the ability to make rational decisions about their own participation in the education process.

CRITERION NO. 2... The adult educator uses the learner as a source of information upon which decisions are to be based.

Conditions:

(A) The adult educator gives as much or more weight to information from the learners as to information from other sources.

(B) The adult educator seeks out and uses information about learners' needs and preferences.

CRITERION NO. 3... The adult educator gives the learner an opportunity to take responsibility to make major decisions in the total curriculum development process.

Conditions:

(A) The adult educator gives the learner an opportunity to select the means and set the pace for problem-solving.

(B) The adult educator gives the learner an opportunity to interpret society's values in ideosyncratic ways.

(C) The adult educator gives the learner an opportunity to determine the problems to be solved and to decide when the solution is reached.

It would be both naive and of only rudimentary usefulness to assume that the idealized action pattern would be so pure and accurately applied that theoretical and philosophical commitment would be naturally operationalized. For this reason an additional approach to determining the adult educator's commitment to guided learning must be provided to measure operational performance in the teaching-learning situation. The following criteria with conditions were identified:

CRITERION NO. 1... The adult educator shares basic pedagogical moves in the teaching cycle with the learner.

Conditions:

(A) Learners have a share in structuring, soliciting, responding, and reacting while they are learning.

(B) Learners have a share in structuring, soliciting, responding, and reacting to "what is to be learned" and"how it is to learned" within a given teaching-learning operation.

CRITERION NO. 2... The adult educator engages the student in actively participating in learning.

Conditions:

(A) Learners are actively involved in the learning situation.

(B) Learners have the opportunity to practice that which is to be learned.

(C) Teaching-learning experiences are so structured as to provide a high proportion of activities from the peak of the "cone of experience".

CRITERION NO. 3... The adult educator encourages students to develop and use logical thought processes.

Conditions:

(A) The adult educator involves the students in experiencing which require analysis, and/or evaluation.

(B) The adult educator utilizes problem-solving processes in the teaching-learning situation.

(C) The adult educator utilizes questions which encourage organizing and interpreting facts as distinguished from memorizing and recalling them.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

"It is important to distinguish between what may be called the systematic and the hauristic generation of research. It is clear that in the ideal case the theory permits the derivation of specific testable propositions and these in turn lead to specific empirical studies. However, it is also manifest that many theories...have had a great effect upon investigative paths without the mediation of explicit propositions..." 2

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2Glen G. Eye and Lenore A. Netzer, Supervision of Instruction. New York: Harper & Row, 1963